

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 21, 2020

The Honorable Ralph DLG Torres
Governor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Caller Box 10007
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Governor Torres:

I write to request that your administration begin submitting periodic reports on the impacts to the Northern Mariana Islands of the migration resulting from the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) between the United States and each of the Freely Associated States (FAS). The Compacts of Free Association with the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia is set to expire in 2023. The Compact with Palau expires in 2024. In preparation of the renegotiation of these compacts, it would benefit the Northern Marianas and provide justification for increased federal funding if we had an up-to-date, accurate understanding of the costs associated with the hosting of COFA migrants.

In the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2003 (P.L.108-188), Congress authorized and appropriated \$30 million in annual mandatory funding to help defray costs associated with providing health care, education, and public safety services or infrastructure to FAS citizens residing in the affected jurisdictions of the Northern Marianas, Guam, Hawaii, and American Samoa. Congress supplements the funding with an additional \$4 million in discretionary funds annually. Funding is allocated among the affected jurisdictions proportionately to the number of FAS citizens residing in each jurisdiction.

The law also allows each of the governors to report regularly on the impacts of the Compacts to their respective jurisdictions. The Commonwealth submitted reports for fiscal years 2000 to 2003, and none since. Yet, Hawaii has provided numerous reports and Guam has reported every year since 2004. Both Guam and Hawaii have reported that current levels of Compact impact funding are woefully insufficient to meet the demands placed on our affected jurisdictions by FAS migrant residents. The same is likely also true for the Northern Marianas, but recent, verifiable data from your administration would help verify the discrepancy.

An updated Compact impact report for the Northern Marianas would also be helpful in discussions to address the Census Bureau's error in the enumeration estimates of COFA migrants to the four Pacific jurisdictions. As you are aware, because of previous Compact Impact overpayments to the CNMI due to the undercounting of COFA

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migrants in Hawaii, the Office of Insular Affairs plans to reduce future payments to the Commonwealth by roughly \$727,210 for fiscal years 2021-2023.

Armed with this information from you, we could also invoke the authorizations for appropriations for Compact increased impact grant funding. §104(e)10 allows for authorization for these costs. But a report would be needed to garner support for additional funds now and especially when Congress acts on the renegotiated Compacts beyond 2023.

Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN
Member of Congress

Cc: Hon. Arnold I. Palacios, Lt. Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Hon. Victor B. Hocog, President, 21st Northern Mariana Island Legislature, The Senate
Hon. Blas Jonathan T. Attao, Speaker, 21st Northern Marianas Legislature, The House of Representatives